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MEXICAN PRIDE

AND

COMMISSIONER CABRERA

By Transfer
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Dressmaking Class at Girls' Industrial School, Mexico City, D. F.

José Juan Tablada

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Mexican Pride and Commissioner Cabrera

THE letter which the Mexican commissioner, Luis Cabrera, has not long ago addressed to "The New York Times," is a precious document for the history of the international relations between the United States and Latin-American countries.

This letter is "representative," as Emerson might have said, and is greatly so, since it reflects not only the soul state of the Mexican people, visible under the present critical circumstances, but also the latent characteristics ready to manifest themselves on the slightest pretext, of all the peoples of Spanish America, which besides having identical origin with Mexico, the same blood and similar racial factors, the common ties of legend, religion and language, also have the same thought and the same heart.

Following is the letter of Licenciado Cabrera, as published in the above mentioned daily:

"To the Editor of The New York Times:

I am referring to your editorial regarding Mexico in yesterday's issue. The attitude which I am supposed to have assumed is a mere conjecture. I refrain from the personal justification, as it would compel me to disclose the nature of our discussion with the Joint Commission.

The purpose of this letter is to express my regret that your newspaper, one of the first in the world, should stoop to defame a diplomatic commission which is striving to reach an agreement for the good of Mexico, as well as of the United States, by insinuating that the Mexican delegation or the Mexican government expects to be bribed in order to yield.

The Mexican delegates have merely asked that Mexico's sovereignty be respected. We have not requested money, nor

are we expecting bribes, personally nor as members of the commission, nor as a Government, however plausible and tactful the subornation.

The New York Times seems to believe that all life's tribulations can be salved with money. We trust that such is not the opinion of the American people. Mexicans do not believe that all that pertains to a man's honor or to the dignity of a nation can be settled by such means.

Respectfully yours,

LUIS CABRERA."

In accordance with the strictest diplomatic canons, and at a solemn moment, the Mexican Commissioner Cabrera has known how to interpret the sentiment of the country he represents, and within the protocol has been compelled to enlighten the ignorance of the wise men who with their backs turned to the most rudimentary knowledge, have, notwithstanding, the pretension to set order in the world, and to solve the problems of the whole universe through the columns of certain American dailies.

In truth, whenever Mexico, at the present time, and Latin-America at other times, has tried to revindicate their most essential rights, their most legitimate prerogatives, all that which, above the material part, is in the moral order the spirit of the race itself, the majority of the American dailies have answered to the noble endeavor of the Latin soul with sarcastic and hostile comments.

We shall not discuss at the present time how far journalism is the plenipotentiary of public opinion; but it reflects the latter, at least in part; it is one of the latter's more evident manifestations and this is sufficient to induce us to combat, in the name of the highest interests of the race, and apropos of the masterful note of Commissioner Cabrera, these abberations of a not only popular, but rudely self-sufficient criterion.

"The Spanish pride has once more prevented the United States from solving the Mexican problem. . . . "

We take this sentence without selecting it from any of so many papers which have obstinately repeated it; that "Spanish pride" which is a star, a brilliant laurel, a nimbus on the forehead of the race, is, in the American opinion, the nucleus of shadow for the Latin problem.

That "Spanish pride" which brings a rictus of sarcasm to the sinister masks of Phoenicians, bourgeois and Jews, of all that crowd which the Christ chased from the temple with a

whip; that "pride" which at the present time, according to the press, prevents the United States from solving the Mexican problem; that sentiment, embarrassing and obstructive, has, notwithstanding, other high, noble, sacred, venerable names; and despite the Hearst penny-a-liners, imperiously demands the respect of all mankind.

This "pride" is called "personal dignity" in the individual; "civism" in the citizen; "courage" in the warrior; "purity" in the priest; "integrity" in the magistrate; "inspiration" in the poet. . .

This "pride" is called "modesty" in the virgin; "fidelity" in the wife; "sentiment of home" in the mother and in the family. . .

This "pride," messieurs the penny-a-liners, who wish to evade the ineluctable spiritual laws, has such biological scope, is so much a condition in any existence, that even when descending the zoological scale, while it may be called ignorance in you (it is over your heads), is called "bravery" in the lion, and "strength" in the steely claw of the eagle!

Perhaps it is called "sheen" in the wings of butterflies, and "color" in the feathers of the peacock!

Its character is so universal, that still descending to the merely organic plane, it is called "sap" in the tree, and "perfume" in the flower; and more still, it is such a condition of our existence, that it burrows under the earth and is called "molecular affinity" in the minerals; and, ascending the cycles, scaling heaven, incorporating its divine essence in the sideral regions, perhaps in its supreme flight it becomes "light" in stars!

* * *

In such manner is that "pride" a peremptory condition of life itself!

In the case of Mexico, it is called "sentiment of independence and national suzerainty," the first and only object—as Commissioner Cabrera declares—of the Mexican representatives at the debates in Atlantic City.

In the letter which we quote, we find these two assertions:

> "The New York Times seems to believe that all life's tribulations can be salved with money."
>
> . . .
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> "Mexicans do not believe that all that pertains to a man's honor or to the dignity of a nation can be settled by such means."

Thesis, antithesis; anverse, reverse; two poles. . . .

On the one side, blind faith without metaphor, absolutely in the dark, substituting sight, which can dwell on horizons, by touch which gropes; exchanging the pupil for the hesitating an-

tennae or for the viscous tentacle. On the other side, faith in the destiny of the Mother-country, and a mystic, fanatical love of liberty. Who are right; the somber, materialistic atheists, or the enlightened mystics?

When in doubt, said the philosopher, let us be on God's side!

Let us be on the side of the Ideal, although you, messieurs the penny-a-liners, the jingoes, the "yellow" editors, call it "pride." We prefer to keep the "ideal," the fire of which we have the right to exhibit, as you exhibit the glitter of your gold, that "condensed force" in your vaults. You should respect our ideal which is our only but supreme force, and not try to analyze it nor to rectify it by means of your parsimonious criticism, because the Ideal does not react under nitric acid, as your vile gold does. . . .

You, who obey matter only and its appetites, remember that Compte forbade to investigate the composition of celestial bodies. And the Ideal, messieurs the yellow journalists, (which is the color of envy and of sulphur) is something more, is much more than any star. . . .

We are with the Ideal, and with Science, and with modern thought. To believe that everything can be purchased and sold, to profess that life consists only of three physiological acts (the three gerunds of the Carthusian), and that its object is a commercial exchange, might have been explicable when the materialistic tyranny of the philosophic schools in Manchester—several years ago—overburdened the mind when Spencer had cut the wings of human spirit.

But now those wings have grown again, as the palms after they have been cut down; now, when the blossoming of all modern philosophies, when the purest springs of human thought salute the mystic renaissance of spiritualism as a new springtime, as a radiant sun; and we, the Latin-Americans, are on the side of the Ideal, high up, and have the most scientific conception of the life down here. . . .

That "Mexican pride," that delicate sentiment of the Mother-country's dignity which Commissioner Cabrera so emphatically asserts, has been revealed for a long time past as vital and as constant as the palpitation of a heart.

When one of the plutocrats of Wall Street, actuated by a philanthropy which is merely a form of remorse, offered two million dollars to improve the sanitary conditions of Mexico, Venustiano Carranza, the First Chief, answered with these phrases, which still re-echo with the Spartan sonority of heroic times:

"We can treat our own wounds."

And he added:

"We prefer to suffer in our bodies than in our spirits. We cannot accept your help."

Stunning sentences which Mexico will no doubt some day chisel on the granite of a monument. Sentences which have their genesis in the stoic interrogation of the tortured Cuauhtemoc: "Am I perchance on a bed of roses!" Sentences in one word, which by their talismanic virtue, inspired Commissioner Cabrera to write the intense and significant letter on which we comment.

* * * *

Let all the Edison phonographs multiply Shylock's voice claiming that everything is purchasable! The Mexican mother-country, with her heart pierced by knives as a Mater Dolorosa, or as the panoply of a hero, will find strength to say: "Perhaps, but I do not sell my honor."

And she will raise her pride, her Mexican pride, as the immortal Gascongnian hero raised his immaculate "Panache."

But in this case, the "panache" is egregious, luminous, eternal, as the snowy top of a volcano!

JOSE JUAN TABLADA.

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